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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 001778

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR USAID/BHR/OFDA -  
SAN JOSE FOR OFDA TIM CALLAGHAN, SENIOR REGIONAL COORD

PLEASE PASS TO WHA/CAR FOR KAREN JO MCISAAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DISASTER DECLARATION FOR DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

1. THE AMBASSADOR HAS DETERMINED THAT DAMAGE CAUSED TO GROUND COVER AS A RESULT OF WILD FIRES THAT AFFECTED THE CENTRAL MOUNTAIN RANGE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, IS OF SUFFICIENT MAGNITUDE TO WARRANT USG ASSISTANCE. THE CHIEF OF MISSION IS THEREFORE EXERCISING THE DISASTER ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY, AS PER 2 FAM 061-062.

2. REPORTING FROM LEADERSHIP OUR SENSE FROM TELEVISION, LOCAL NEWS REPORTS AND ON-THE-GROUND REPORTS FROM PARTNERS IN THE AREA IS THAT A DECLARATION OF DISASTER IS FULLY JUSTIFIED.

3. INTENSIVE DROUGHT ON THE ISLAND HAS REDUCED THE AVAILABILITY OF WATER FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION AND IRRIGATION AND CAUSED EXTENSIVE WILD FIRES IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. APPROXIMATELY 100,000 TAREAS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED TO DATE BY THE FOREST FIRES. THE DETERIORATION OF GROUND COVER HAS ALREADY CREATED SOIL EROSION AND HAS INCREASED SEDIMENTATION OF DAM RESERVOIRS AND WATER SYSTEM INTAKES. THIS SITUATION WILL WORSEN AS SOON AS THE RAINY SEASON STARTS. HILLSIDE PLANTING OF COFFEE AND OTHER BASIC CROPS HAS ALSO BEEN AFFECTED, BECAUSE OF THE WILD FIRES. IT IS APPARENT THAT ADDITIONAL OUTSIDE FINANCIAL RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED IMMEDIATELY FOR THE PREVENTION OF SOIL EROSION AND FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THOSE AREAS BURNED BY THE RECENT FIRES.

4. THE AMBASSADOR IS CONFIDENT THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION IS BEYOND THE ABILITY OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY AND THAT IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE USG TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE. WE HAVE RECEIVED A FORMAL REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE SECRETARY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES HAS INDICATED

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THAT IT WILL ACCEPT USG EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED AREAS.

5. USAID WILL UTILIZE A \$50,000 GRANT TO RESTORE GROUND COVER, AND TO PROVIDE EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING TO COMMUNITY FIRE FIGHTERS.

6. ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT ARE NOT FORSEEN AND THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT ANY ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE BEYOND THE DAA AMOUNT REQUESTED MUST BE SPECIFICALLY APPROVED BY OFDA. EMBASSY WILL KEEP OFDA INFORMED AS TO ANY POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL REQUESTS WHICH MAY BE FORTHCOMING.

7. HOST COUNTRY AGENCIES INVOLVED IN RELIEF OPERATIONS INCLUDE THE SECRETARIAT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR REGIONAL PERSONNEL, IN THE AFFECTED AREAS.

8. USAID IS CONTACTING OTHER DONOR PARTNERS TO COORDINATE A RESPONSE TO THIS DISASTER.

9. U.S. CITIZENS HAVE NOT BEEN AFFECTED TO OUR KNOWLEDGE.

10. THE U.S. EMBASSY IS NOT REQUESTING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE AT THIS POINT PENDING FURTHER ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION.

11. EMBASSY WILL ADVISE AS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE. HERTELL